## STHE S REFUGEES

By A. CONAN DOYLE, Author of "The Return of Sherlock Holmes"

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(Continued from Thursday.)

A unin ran through her herves. Who or what could he be, this silent man? Then suddenly it struck her that he might be dumb.

"Perhaps monsleur is afflicted," she said. "Perhaps monsieur cannot speak. If that be the cause of your silence, will you raise your hand, and I shall understand." He sat rigid and silent.

Then a sudden mad fear came upon her shut up in the dark with this cadful, voiceless thing. She screamed in her terror and strove to pull down the window and open the door. But a grip of steel closed suddenly round her wrist and forced her back into her seat. They were already out on the country prouds far beyond Versailles. It was darker than before, heavy clouds had banked over the beavens, and the rumbling of thunder was heard low down on the horizon.

The lady lay back panting upon the leather cushions of the carriage. She was a brave woman, and yet this sudden strange horror coming upon her at the moment when she was weakest had shaken her to the soul. She crouched in the corner, staring across with eyes which were dilated with terror at the figure on the other side. If he would but say something. Any revelation, any menace, was better than this si-

"Sir," she, "there is some mis-take here. I do not know by what right you prevent me from pulling down the window and giving my directions to the coachman."

He said nothing. "I repeat, sir, that there is some mistake. This is the carriage of my brother, M. de Vivonne, and he is not a man who will allow his sister to be treated

courteously." few heavy drops of rain splashed st one window. The clouds were and denser. She had quite lost of that motionless figure, but it ill the more terrible to her now it was unseen. She screamed

sheer terror. r," she cried, clutching forward ith her hands and grasping his sleeve, you frighten me. You terrify me. I have never harmed you. Why should you wish to hurt an unfortunate woman? Oh, speak to me, for God's sake,

Still the patter of rain upon the window and no other sound save her own sharp breathing.

"Perhaps you do not know who I am?" she continued, endeavoring to assume her usual tone of command, and talking now to an absolute and impenetrable darkness. "You may learn when it is too late that you have chosen the wrong person for this pleasantry. I am the Marquise de Montes-

and I am not one who forgets a If you know anything of the you must know that my word me weight with the king. If you O Jesus! Have mercy!" A livid flash of lightning had burst from the heart of the cloud and for an

instant the whole countryside and the laterior of the caleche were as light as The man's face was within a hand breadth of her own, his mouth wide open, his eyes mere shining slits, convulsed with silent merriment. Every detail flashed out clear in that vivid light-his red quivering tongue, the lighter pink beneath it, the broad white teeth, the short brown beard cut into peak and bristling forward. But it was not the sudden flash; it

was not the laughing, cruel face, which



she screamed. "Maurice! It is you?"

shot an ice cold shudder through Francoise de Montespan. It was that, of all men upon earth, this was he whom she most dreaded and whom she had least thought to see.

Maurice!" she screamed. "Maurice! It is you?"

Yes, little wifie, it is I. We are reto each other's arms, you see, after this interval." Oh, Maurice, how you have fright-

ed me! How could you be so cruel? Why would you not speak to me?" ecause it was so sweet to sit in sice and to think that I realle bed

"I have wronged you, Maurice; I have wronged you! Forgive me!"

"We do not forgive in our family, my darling Francoise. "You may kill me if you will," she

monned. "I will," said he simply.

Still the carriage flew along, jolting and staggering in the deeply rutted country roads. The storm had passed, but the growl of the thunder and the faroff glint of a lightning flash were to be heard and seen on the other side of the heavens.

"Where are you taking me?" she ask-

"To Portillac, my little wifie." "And why there? What would you

"I would silence that little lying tongue forever. It shall deceive no more men."

"You would murder me? You have a stone for a heart." "It is true. My other was given to a

woman." "Oh, my sins are indeed punished. Can I do nothing to atone?"

"I will see that you atone." "You have a sword by your side, Maurice. Why do you not kill me, then, if you are so bitter against me? Why do you not pass it through my

heart?" "Rest assured that I would have done so had I not an excellent reason."
"Why, then?"

"I will tell you, At Portillac I have the right of the high justice, the middle and the low. I am seigneur there, and can try, condemn and execute. It is my lawful privilege. This pitiful king will not even know how to avenge you, for the right is mine and he cannot gainsay it without making an enemy of every seigneur in France."

He opened his mouth again and laughed at his own device, while she, shivering in every limb, turned away from his cruel face and glowing eyes and buried her face in her hands. Once more she prayed God to forgive her for her poor sinful life. So they whirled through the night behind the clattering horses, the husband and wife saying nothing, but with hatred and fear ragin their bearts, until a ne down upon them brazier a keep and the shadfrom the s 1. loomed vaguely up ow of the l. in front of : "he darkness. It

was the casti-CHAP ... ND thus it v TOOK BRW Catinat and from their c webu'" the midnight . discharged its prisone eyes; hence, too, came planking and that stran

in the early morning. And happened that they found the ..... looking down at Francoise de Montespan as she was led to her death, and that they heard that last piteous cry for aid at the instant when the heavy hand of the ruffian with the ax fell upon her shoulder and she was forced down upon her knees beside the block. She shrank screaming from the dreadful red stained, greasy billet of wood, but the butcher heaved up his weapon and the seigneur had taken a step forward with hand outstretched to seize the long auburn hair and to drag the dainty head down with it when suddenly he was struck motionless with astonishment and stood with his foot advanced and his hand still out, his mouth half open and his eyes fixed in

front of him.

And, indeed, what he had seen was enough to fill any man with amazement. Out of the small square window which faced him a man had suddenly shet headforemost, pitching on to his outstretched hands and then bounding to his feet. Within a foot of his heels came the head of a second one, who fell more heavily than the first, and yet recovered himself as quickly. The one wore the blue coat and silver facings of the king's guard; the second had the dark coat and clean shaven face of a man of peace, but each carried a short rusty iron bar in his hand. Not a word did either of them say, but the soldier took two quick steps forward and struck at the headsman while he was still poising himself for a blow at the victim. There was a thud, with a crackle like a breaking egg, and the bar flew into pieces. The headsman gave a dreadful cry, dropped his ax, clapped his two hands to his head and, running zigzag across the scaffold, fell over, a dead man, into the courtyard beneath.

Quick as a flash De Catinat had caught up the ax and faced De Mon-

tespan. "Now!" said he. The seigneur had for the instant been too astounded to speak. Now he understood at least that these strangers had come between him and his prey.

"Seize these men!" he shricked, turning to his followers.
"One moment!" cried De Catinat,

with a voice and manner which commanded attention. "You see by my coat what I am. I am the body servant of the king. Who touches me

touches him." "On, you cowards!" roared De Mon-

But the men at arms hesitated, for the fear of the king was as a great shadow which hung over all France. De Catinat saw their indecision,

"This woman," he cried, "is the king's own favorite, and if any harm come to a lock of her hair I tell you that there is not a living soul within this portalice who will not die a death of torture." "Who are these men, Marceau?" cried

the seigneur furiously. "They are prisoners, your excellen-

"Who ordered you to detain them?" "You did. The escort brought your signet ring."

"I never saw the men. There is deviltry in this. But they shall not beard me in ,ny own castle, nor stand between me and my own wife. No, par dieu! They shall not and live! You

men, Marceau, Etienne, Gilbert, Jean, Pierre, all you who have eaten my

bread, on to them, I sny!" He glanced round with furious eyes, but they fell only upon hung heads and averted fages. With a hideous curse be flashed out his sword and rushed at his wife, who still knelt half insensible beside the block. De Catinat sprang between them to protect her, but Marceau, the bearded seneschal, had already selzed his master round the waist. With the strength of a maniae, his teeth clinched and the foam churning from the corners of his lips, De Montespan writhed round in the man's grasp, and, shortening his sword, he thrust it through the brown beard and deep into the throat behind it. Marceau fell back with a choking cry, the blood bubbling from his mouth and his wound; but before his mur



Shortening the sword, he thrust it deep into the throat.

derer could disengage his weapon De Catinat and the American, aided by a dozen of the retainers, had dragged him down on to the scaffold, and Amos Green had pinioned him so securely that he could but move his eyes and Amory de kis lips, with which he lay glaring and spitting at them. So savage were his own followers against him-for Marceau was well loved among themthat with ay and block so roady inc. tice might very swiftly have had her way had not a long, clear bugle call, rising and falling in a thousand little twirls and flourishes, clanged out suddenly in the still morning air. De Catinat pricked up his ears at the sound of it like a hound at the huntsman's call.

"Did you hear, Amos?" "It was a trumpet."

"It was the guards' bugie call. You, there, hasten to the gate! Throw up the portcullis and drop the drawbridge! Stir yourselves, or even now you may suffer for your master's sins! It has been a narrow escape, Amos.'

"You may say so, friend. I saw him put out his hand to her hair even as you sprang from the window. Another instant and he would have had her scalped. But she is a fair woman-the fairest that ever my eyes rested uponand it is not fit that she should kneel her husband's long black cloak from him and made a pillow for the sense less woman with a tenderness and dellcacy which came strangely from a man of his build and bearing.

He was still stooping over her when there came the clang of the falling bridge, and an instant later the clatter of the hoofs of a troop of cavalry, who swept, with wave of plumes, toss of manes and jingle of steel, into the courtyard. At the head was a tall horseman in the full dress of the guards, with a curling feather in his hat, high buff gloves and his sword gleaming in the sunlight. De Catinat's face brightened at the sight of him, and he was down in an instant beside his stirrup.

"De Brissac!" he cried.

"De Catinat! Now where in the name of wonder did you come from?" "I have been a prisoner. Tell me, De Brissac, did you leave the message in Paris? And the archbishop came? And the marriage?"

"Took place as arranged. That is why this poor woman whom I see yonder has had to leave the palace."

"I thought as much." "I trust that no harm has come to "My friend and I were just in time

to save her. Her husband lies there. He is a fiend, De Brissac." "Very likely. But an angel might have grown bitter had he had the same treatment.'

"We have him pinioned here. He has siain a man, and I have slain another." "On my word, you have been busy." "How did you know that we were

(To Be Continued.)

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